United Nations A/67/139 (Part I)

General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 July 2012
English
Original: Arabic/English/Spanish

Sixty-seventh session
Items 91 and 98 of the preliminary list*

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/67/50.

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I. Introduction

1. By paragraph 10 of resolution 66/25, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region and other concerned States, in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 46/30 and taking into account the evolving situation in the region, and to seek from those States their views on the measures outlined in chapters III and IV of the study annexed to the report of the Secretary-General of 10 October 1990 (A/45/435) or other relevant measures, in order to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. By paragraph 11 of resolution 66/25, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixty-seventh session a report on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. On 13 February 2012, a note verbale was sent to all Member States, drawing their attention to paragraphs 10 and 11 of resolution 66/25 and seeking their views on the matter. The replies received from the Governments of Australia, Austria, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Norway, Panama and the Syrian Arab Republic are reproduced in section III. The reply of the European Union is reproduced in section IV, in accordance with the modalities set out in resolution 65/276. Additional replies received from Governments will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Observations

3. The Secretary-General reaffirms that reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict remains a priority, and is more urgent than ever in the context of the profound transformations at play in the Middle East today. He reiterates that it is in the best interests of both Israelis and Palestinians to achieve an end to the conflict, an end to the occupation that began in 1967, a resolution of all final status issues — including Jerusalem, borders, refugees and security — and the establishment of a sovereign, independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine existing side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. He calls for the implementation of all relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009).

4. As called for by the Quartet in its statement of 23 September 2011, the Secretary-General appeals to the parties to overcome the current obstacles and resume direct negotiations without preconditions, with a view to a final resolution of the conflict. He will, together with his Quartet partners, continue to stress the necessity to pursue dialogue and make real progress towards the two-State solution. The Secretary-General reiterates that any peace settlement must be comprehensive and emphasizes the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative in this regard. He calls upon all concerned parties inside and outside the region to seek to create stable security conditions and an eventual settlement that would facilitate the process of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. The Secretary-General reiterates the continued readiness of the United Nations to provide any assistance in this regard.

5. On 14 October 2011, the Secretary-General, and the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, co-sponsors of the resolution on the Middle East (NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I) and Corr.2, annex) adopted in 1995 by the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in consultation with the States of the region, appointed Jaakko Laajava, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Finland, as facilitator for the 2012 conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Finland was also designated as the host Government for that conference.

6. Following his appointment, the facilitator conducted consultations and subsequently reported to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in Vienna from 30 April to 11 May 2012. The facilitator emphasized that the month of December had been proposed during his consultations as a possible time for the conference and that the Government of Finland was preparing accordingly.

7. The facilitator, the Secretary-General and the co-sponsors have continued and intensified their respective consultations, in particular undertaking preparations for and promoting the aims of the 2012 conference. The Secretary-General has encouraged States from the region to engage with and support the facilitator's efforts. He strongly believes that this conference will be a unique opportunity for all to constructively address common security problems on an equal level. He reiterates the continued readiness of the United Nations to provide any assistance deemed helpful in that regard.

III. Replies received from Governments

Australia

[Original: English]
[1 June 2012]

Australia continues to support the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, freely arrived at by regional States. The Government of Australia welcomed the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons concerning the 1995 Middle East resolution. The Preparatory Committee meeting from 30 April to 11 May 2012, which Australia had the honour to chair, emphasized the importance of holding a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons in 2012, with the participation of all States of the region. Australia will continue to support constructive efforts towards progress in the implementation of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Austria

[Original: English]
[31 May 2012]

Executive summary

Austria, in line with the policies of the European Union, continues to fully support the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East and welcomes the consensus reached at the 2010 Review Conference to initiate a process leading to a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East, as well as the appointment in 2011 of Jaakko Laajava, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Finland, as facilitator. Progress on the issue is essential for the integrity of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and is intimately linked to the peace process in the Middle East. All States of the region are called upon to seize this historic opportunity and to make constructive contributions towards the success of the process.

Austrian position on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are among the key priorities of Austrian foreign policy and are fully in line with European Union positions. Austria has thus consistently supported the goal of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction as enshrined in the resolution on the Middle East, adopted at the 1995 Review Conference and subsequently reaffirmed at the 2000 and 2010 review conferences. Austria welcomed the consensus reached at the Review Conference in 2010 to initiate a process leading to the full implementation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Austria also welcomed the appointment in 2011 of Mr. Laajava as facilitator for that process and of Finland as host of the conference foreseen for 2012. The Finnish team has embarked on its tasks with energy, commitment and optimism. This constitutes an important step towards a goal that Austria fully shares.

Achieving a positive outcome will require that all States of the region seize this historic opportunity and make constructive contributions towards the success of the process. Austria firmly believes that such a process towards a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery would be an important confidence- and security-building contribution for the Middle East, and therefore welcomes all efforts made in that regard.

As stated previously, progress on the issue is essential for the integrity of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Austria is concerned about the continued presence of weapons of mass destruction in the region and the lack of universality of relevant multilateral legal instruments, most notably the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as well as the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. In that context, Austria calls on the State in the Middle East that has not done so to accede without delay to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State.

Colombia

[Original: English]
[10 May 2012]

The Republic of Colombia has a strong commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime as a principle of its foreign policy. In that regard, Colombia has sought general and complete disarmament and has advocated for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a contribution to peace and international security.

Colombia is a State party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), approved by national Law 45 of 1971 and valid since 6 September 1972. The purpose of the Treaty is the denuclearization of Latin America and the Caribbean — the undertaking entered into to keep their territories free from nuclear weapons. Through the Treaty, Latin America and the Caribbean became the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area.

The States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco are committed to use the nuclear material and facilities that are under their jurisdiction exclusively for peaceful purposes as well as to prohibit and prevent in their respective territories the testing, use, manufacture, production or acquisition by any means whatsoever of any nuclear weapons, by the parties themselves, directly or indirectly, on behalf of anyone else or in any other way.

Colombia acknowledges the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones, since they are an important way to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons. In that regard, Colombia considers it important to establish new zones in regions where they do not exist, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, in accordance with the principles and guidelines defined in the 1999 report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly (A/54/42).

Taking into consideration the preceding remarks, Colombia supports the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and, accordingly, Colombia has always voted in favour of the resolution traditionally presented within the General Assembly framework on the matter of relevant measures to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[21 May 2012]

Cuba reiterates its support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world, as part of the efforts to achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament. These zones should be based on agreements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned and should include arrangements for cooperation between States parties and signatories.

Cuba is a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first such zone in a densely populated region and paved the way for other regions to follow.

The two review conferences of States parties and signatories to treaties that establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, held in Mexico in 2005 and in New York in 2010, respectively, made it possible to put into practice concrete forms of cooperation among the various zones and with other interested States and to reaffirm the strong commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Unfortunately, in the Middle East, the call by the overwhelming majority of the States of the region for it to be made into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, has gone unheeded, despite the many resolutions and decisions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council and by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The decision adopted by the Eighth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which includes a detailed plan of action to implement the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference by convening a conference in 2012, is one of the decisions that must be implemented as soon as possible.

Cuba welcomes the appointment of a conference facilitator and considers that every possible effort must be made to achieve a successful outcome of that conference, which is to be held in Helsinki in 2012, with the participation of all the States of the region.

The creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the region of the Middle East would make an important contribution to the attainment of the goal of nuclear disarmament and would be a huge step in the peace process in that region. In order for this to happen, Israel — the only country in the region that has neither become nor stated its intention to become a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty — must accede to the Treaty without delay and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards.

In the meantime, Cuba urges the Governments concerned to put an immediate stop to the transfer to Israel of any type of nuclear equipment, information, material and facilities, resources or devices, as well as nuclear-related scientific and technological assistance.

Egypt

[Original: English]
[22 May 2012]

The item entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East" was first included in the agenda of the General Assembly in 1974 at the request of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Since 1980, the General Assembly has annually adopted a resolution — without a vote, thereby reflecting unanimous endorsement by the States Members of the United Nations of its objective — calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and Egypt has relentlessly pursued the objective of ridding the Middle East of the threat of nuclear weapons.

The main impediment to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East has been Israel. Egypt notes with grave concern that Israel remains the sole country in the Middle East not to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. While all States of the Middle East have become State parties to the Treaty, Israel persists in ignoring repeated calls for its adherence to the Treaty and the placement of its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. Its refusal to adhere to the Treaty has perpetuated a dangerous imbalance and, accordingly, presents a threat to regional and international peace and security.

The 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons addressed, in its Final Document, Israel's non-adherence to the Treaty. It recalled the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, and reaffirmed the urgency and importance of achieving universality of the Treaty (see NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)).

Egypt also reaffirms the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, and the States parties to the Treaty reiterated unanimously at the 2000 Review Conference the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. In its Final Document (NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I and II)), the 2000 Review Conference recalled that in paragraph 4 of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, the Conference called upon all States in the Middle East that had not yet done so, without exception, to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. The Conference noted, in that connection, that the report of the United Nations Secretariat on the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East (NPT/CONF.2000/7) stated that several States had acceded to the Treaty and that, with those accessions, all States of the region of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, were States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Conference welcomed the accession of those States and reaffirmed the importance of Israel's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the treaty in the Middle East.

In addition to urgent calls for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, inter alia, in the context of the Non-Proliferation Treaty review processes, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the General Assembly and the Security Council called upon Israel urgently to place its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the IAEA (Security Council resolution 487 (1981)) and recalled the objective of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East (Security Council resolution 687 (1991)).

In an effort to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference emphasized the importance of a process leading to full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and, to that end, endorsed a number of practical steps. Among those steps was the convening by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, of a conference in 2012, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass

destruction. The Final Document also stipulated that the 2012 conference shall take as its terms of reference the 1995 resolution.

The Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference also stipulated as practical steps the appointment, by the Secretary-General and the co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, of a facilitator with a specific mandate in this regard, and the designation of a host Government for the 2012 Conference. This eventually took place in October 2011, almost 17 months after the adoption of the action plan. Egypt welcomed in that regard the designation of Finland as host Government and the appointment of Under-Secretary of State Jaakko Laajava of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland as facilitator, whom Egypt looks forward to continuing to work with in this regard in accordance with his mandate as stipulated in the 2010 Final Document.

Egypt believes that the 2012 conference is a step forward towards establishing the nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and expresses its intent to cooperate fully with all relevant parties, in accordance with the 2010 Final Document, so that the conference will have a positive and meaningful contribution towards establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

The 2012 conference is not an end in itself, but must launch a sustained and serious process towards the full implementation of the 1995 resolution and the establishment of the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone, involving concrete steps and measures to be taken in this regard within specific time frames.

Egypt notes the call for the prompt and full implementation of the 1995 resolution and the 2000 and 2010 outcomes on the Middle East, and the special responsibility that rests in this regard with the nuclear-weapon States, especially the three depositary States which co-sponsored the 1995 resolution, in addition to the Secretary-General.

The Final Document of the Seventeenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, on 9 and 10 May 2012, reaffirmed the need for the speedy establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, urged the Secretary-General and the co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, to exert utmost efforts in ensuring the success of the conference to be convened in 2012, and stressed the importance of the full implementation of all aspects of the agreed plan of action.

The decision adopted by the latest Summit of the League of Arab States, held in Baghdad on 29 March 2012, reaffirmed the continued keenness of Arab countries to make a success of the efforts aimed at establishing the envisaged zone.

Within the context of the Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycles, Egypt submitted several working papers on the issue of the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, containing substantive recommendations on concrete measures and actions needed for the full implementation of the 1995 resolution, the most recent of which was a working paper submitted to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in Vienna from 30 April to 11 May 2012, entitled "Implementation of the 1995 resolution and the 2000 and 2010 outcomes on the Middle East" (NPT/CONF.2015/PC.I/WP.13), which further elaborates Egypt's position and views on the issue.

Egypt firmly believes that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in areas of conflict contributes significantly to easing tensions, confidence-building, conflict prevention and the development of peaceful relations and mutual cooperation. Egypt believes that the only prerequisite for the commencement of negotiations on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is the existence of political will, whether among States in the region or parties that have a direct stake in the region's security and stability.

The existence of political will among all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, including all States parties in the region, has been manifested through their consensual adoption of a process leading to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

This manifestation of commitment by States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty needs to be implemented promptly. Egypt looks forward to earnest efforts by the Secretary-General as well as the depositary States to undertake the necessary agreed measures to pave the way for the early commencement of negotiations on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

The success of such negotiations would represent a serious breakthrough in efforts geared towards regaining security in a region currently facing an Israeli nuclear threat that provokes further proliferation and presents security challenges.

Egypt expresses its intent to cooperate actively with all parties in an effort to safeguard the Middle East against all nuclear threats through a comprehensive and balanced approach that can ensure the security of all States of the region against nuclear dangers through the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons.

Japan

[Original: English]
[30 May 2012]

Japan supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements voluntarily arrived at among the States of the regions concerned and on the condition that the establishment of such zones would contribute to regional and global stability and security.

Japan welcomes the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which endorsed practical steps for full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, including convening a conference on the establishment of the Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction in 2012. Japan also welcomes the appointment of Jaakko Laajava as the facilitator. Although active and constructive contributions by all States of the region are indispensable to ensure steady implementation of those steps, all the States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, whether States of the region or not, have a stake in the implementation of the resolution.

In that regard, the Government of Japan and the United Nations University are going to jointly hold the Global Forum on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

Education in Nagasaki, Japan, on 10 and 11 August 2010. One of the sessions will be devoted to the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In September 2010, Japan, together with nine other non-nuclear-weapon States, launched the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. The Initiative also supports the practical steps endorsed by the 2010 Review Conference and stands ready to offer the necessary assistance for the realization of such a conference.

It is imperative that compliance with relevant legal instruments be fully assured. Japan has urged Iran to comply with the obligations and requirements in the relevant resolutions of the IAEA Board of Governors and the Security Council regarding Iran's nuclear programme, including the suspension of all enrichment-related activities and the ratification and implementation of the IAEA additional protocol. In that context, Japan also stresses the importance of strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the IAEA safeguard system, which plays a vital role in underpinning the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Japan strongly believes that the conclusion of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols by all States in the region is essential for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Japan, with the aim of achieving universal adherence to the comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols, is ready to share its expertise and provide technical assistance to interested States in the region in concert with IAEA.

Japan is firmly committed to supporting the Middle East peace process, considering that it is a key for regional stability, which is a vital factor in establishing a foundation for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Based on the recognition that the only way to achieve peace in the Middle East is through the realization of the peaceful coexistence between the two States of Israel and a future Palestinian State, Japan has been making its utmost efforts to that end. In particular, Japan has been promoting the following measures:

(a) Japan maintains high-level political dialogues with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to encourage them to advance the peace process. For instance, Koichiro Gemba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, visited Israel and the Palestinian territories in May 2012 and encouraged both parties to advance on the resumption of the direct negotiations. In addition, Yutaka Iimura, Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for the Middle East, visited Israel and the Palestinian territories in June and August 2011 and in February 2012 to work with high-level officials of the relevant parties to play a responsible role in enhancing the Middle East peace process based on a two-State solution. In addition, Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, visited Japan, at the invitation of the Government of Japan, in April 2012. He held meetings with Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and discussed various issues, including Japan's assistance to the Palestinians and the Middle East peace process. Prime Minister Noda and President Abbas confirmed the importance of continuing to support the efforts for Palestinian State-building.

(b) Japan has been actively involved in assisting the Palestinians since the Oslo Accords of 1993. As of May 2012, Japan has disbursed a total of more than $1.2 billion in assistance to the Palestinians. In fiscal year 2011, Japan contributed non-project grant aid of $100 million in addition to $25.8 million of supplementary budget to support the well-being of Palestinian people in vulnerable areas.

(c) The Government of Japan has actively been initiating and sponsoring various projects that will contribute to confidence-building between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In addition to that, Japan, based on its efforts in the fields mentioned above, is promoting the "Corridor for peace and prosperity" initiative through regional cooperation among Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and Japan, as its mid- and long-term effort to generate hope and trust among the peoples in the region for future coexistence and co-prosperity between Israel and a future Palestinian State. The "Four-Party Consultation Unit", consisting of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and Japan, had its sixth technical-level meeting in April 2012, and the parties renewed their commitment to exert the utmost efforts on the initiative, aiming at starting the operation of Jericho Agro-Industrial Park in 2012. The four parties also agreed on a Joint Progress Report, mentioning what has been achieved for the Park, actions to be taken in 2012 and proposed actions to be taken in 2013 and beyond.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[30 May 2012]

Lebanon affirms the following:

- Lebanon does not possess weapons of mass destruction, and regards the threat or use of such weapons as illegal;
- Lebanon complies with United Nations General Assembly resolutions, particularly as regards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and cooperates in efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. It expresses its deep concern, however, about Israel's failure to adhere to international legitimacy. Israel maintains a nuclear arsenal that constitutes a threat to all the countries of the region, and consequently to international peace and security;
- Lebanon supports and welcomes all initiatives to achieve disarmament, particularly in the Middle East, and reaffirms the role of the United Nations in that regard;
- Lebanon has introduced laws and regulations that allow for the monitoring of the export, transit and cross-border transport of any type of weapon of mass destruction or related components;
- Lebanon does not provide assistance of any kind to any group seeking to acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, provide or use nuclear or other weapons;
- Lebanon supports Arab conferences and initiatives aimed at eliminating the causes of tension in the Middle East, in particular by ridding the region of weapons of mass destruction. It participates actively in all meetings of the technical committee of the League of Arab States responsible for preparing a draft treaty on ridding the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction and, in particular, nuclear weapons. Lebanon stresses the danger which Israel's nuclear armaments and other Israeli weapons of mass destruction represent for international peace and Arab national security.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[5 June 2012]

Mexico believes that the international community must continue to promote the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world as an effective means of attaining the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons, with priority being given to the strengthening of regional and international peace and security.

As a sponsor of and party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), signed in 1967, which established the first zone of this type in a densely populated region, Mexico supports and has traditionally supported efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In this regard, the existence and/or threat of existence of a nuclear arsenal among the countries of the Middle East represents a major obstacle to coexistence among the countries of the region. The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone would therefore help to ease tensions and would contribute to a climate of peace and security, without prejudice to the right of States to make peaceful use of nuclear energy and the importance of cooperation by user countries with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with respect to their activities in this regard.

Progress made by the international community in recent years in this respect has been significant. An agreement reached during the Eighth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in 2010, called upon the Secretary-General and the co-sponsors of the relevant 1995 resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, to convene a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. This agreement is a tangible demonstration of the engagement and full support of the international community. Mexico is aware of the political differences that continue to prevail among the countries of the region with respect to the holding of such a conference. However, a delay could impair not only the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, but also the very viability of the system established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Mexico urges the actors involved, including Mr. Jaakko Laajava of Finland, the designated facilitator, to continue their efforts to organize the conference as scheduled.

Overcoming differences of opinion with respect to the scope, application and basic obligations to which each member State would be subject in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone represents a major challenge in the Middle East. However, the experience of other regions of the world that have achieved successful results, with flexibility and good faith playing an indispensable role, is encouraging. It therefore seems to us that the principal task is to overcome scepticism with regard to the establishment of a zone of the type now being proposed for that region.

In this respect, the legal provisions of existing treaties establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone can provide strong support for future negotiations. Since the adoption of the first treaty, the various regions that have established such zones have drawn on earlier experiences in order to refine and improve their agreements.

The geographical demarcation of the zone, the negotiation mechanisms, the definition of nuclear weapons, the transparency shown by States before and after the negotiations, and the verification mechanisms are only some of the aspects that can be studied in detail and compared with data from other regions of the world in order to facilitate this task. On several occasions the Latin American and Caribbean region has provided support and has shared the experience gained by the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean in this regard. As the only permanent agency established to monitor compliance with the provisions of a treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone, it can act as a consultant to the countries of the region that request its assistance.

Lastly, civil society must play a major role in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Recent developments in the Middle East have provided an opportunity to reflect on the role of civil society in political events in the region; it must therefore be involved in the process so that it can directly and consistently call for the establishment of such a zone, which will undoubtedly contribute to better coexistence among the peoples of the region.

Norway

[Original: English]
[12 June 2012]

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are among the key priorities of the foreign policy of Norway. Recognizing the important contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to the strengthening of the international non-proliferation regime and to regional and global peace and security, Norway continues to support the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, freely arrived at by regional States. Furthermore, the Norwegian Government fully supports the Final Document of the 2010 non-proliferation treaty review conference, which endorsed practical steps for full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, including the convening in 2012 of a conference on the establishment of the Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Norway strongly supports the conference and has provided both political and financial support in that regard.

The Government of Norway is fully aware of the challenges to proliferation affecting the Middle East region and the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Hence, Norway has repeatedly called upon all States in the region to make progress towards the establishment of such a zone and to refrain from taking measures that would preclude the achievement of this objective. Norway is of the view that the conclusion of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols by all States in the region is essential not only for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, but also as a means to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. It is imperative that compliance with those legal instruments be fully assured.

Norway is party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Universal adherence and compliance to those vital instruments and their control mechanisms provide a fundamental bulwark

against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Norway calls for full universalization and full compliance with the obligations set by the treaties.

At its sixty-fifth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 66/25, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East". The following is a response to the request of the Office for Disarmament Affairs for the views of the Government of the Norway on the issues covered by the resolution and to paragraphs 7 and 9 of the resolution, in which the Assembly invites all States to, respectively, render their assistance and consider appropriate means in the establishment of the zone.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are among the key priorities of Norway's foreign policy. Norway attaches great importance to the voluntary establishment of internationally recognized and effective nuclear-weapon-free zones in accordance with the guidelines adopted at the 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. The important contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to the strengthening of the international non-proliferation regime and to regional and global peace and security has been universally recognized.

Norway continues to support the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, freely arrived at by regional States.

Norway joined, at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the adoption by consensus of resolution 66/25, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East". Norway also supported the adoption of the International Atomic Energy Agency resolution (GC(55)/RES/14) entitled "Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East" at the fifty-fifth regular session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, held at Vienna from 19 to 23 September 2011.

At the 2010 Review Conference, Norway contributed to securing agreement on the action plan for the three pillars of the Treaty, and on the resolution on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. As previously mentioned, the Government of Norway fully supports the Final Document of the 2010 non-proliferation treaty review conference, adopted on 28 May 2010, which endorsed practical steps for full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, including the convening of a conference on the establishment of the Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction in 2012.

Norway has provided financial support to the Office for Disarmament Affairs for preparing the conference, as well as financial support to non-governmental and civil society organizations working on these issues.

In addition, Bjørn Berdal of Norway is part of a panel of senior experts assisting Jaakko Laajava in his efforts to prepare and facilitate the conference.

In November 2011, the Ambassador of Norway in Vienna chaired the IAEA Forum on Experience of Possible Relevance to the Creation of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East, which was held at IAEA headquarters in Vienna. Norway has also taken part in workshops and seminars focusing on the possibilities of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Norway has called upon all States in the region to make progress towards the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, and to refrain from taking measures that would preclude the achievement of that objective.

The Government of Norway is fully aware of the challenges to proliferation affecting the Middle East region and the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East will ultimately require the adherence by all States in the region to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by all States in the region would also be a substantial and practical step towards that end. Norway has been actively taking part in the international efforts to encourage the universal adherence to the multilateral instruments on the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. Norway has always promoted the universality not only of nuclear, but also of chemical and biological non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament agreements and instruments, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention and The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.

Norway consistently urges States not party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to become parties, as non-nuclear-weapon States. Norway has also urged all Middle Eastern States to join at the earliest date the relevant treaties related to weapons of mass destruction to which they are not parties in order to foster an environment conducive to the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the region.

Norway is of the view that the conclusion of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols by all States in the region is essential not only for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, but also as a means to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. It is also imperative that compliance with those legal instruments be fully assured. Furthermore, it is important to strengthen the IAEA safeguards system, which plays a vital role in underpinning the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Norway has urged Iran to comply with the obligations and requirements in the relevant IAEA Board of Governors and Security Council resolutions regarding its nuclear programme, including the suspension of all enrichment-related activities and the ratification and implementation of the Additional Protocol. Norway has urged States that are party to the Treaty to comply fully with all its provisions and with all relevant Security Council and IAEA resolutions.

Norway is firmly committed to supporting the Middle East peace process, considering that it is key for regional stability, which is a vital factor in establishing a foundation for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

Panama

[Original: Spanish]
[19 April 2012]

Panama supports the steps taken by the United Nations with a view to the adoption of resolutions on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the

Middle East and urges States parties to collaborate with the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a view to implementation of General Assembly resolution 66/25, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East".

Syrian Arab Republic

[Original: Arabic]
[25 May 2012]

The Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the only way to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and rein in the threat of nuclear proliferation is for Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear party and submit all its nuclear activities to an International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards agreement.

The Syrian Arab Republic has worked tirelessly to establish a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and, in particular, nuclear weapons in the Middle East. To that end, in April 2003, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, it submitted an initiative to the United Nations Security Council to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction and, in particular, nuclear weapons. However, the position of certain influential States in the Security Council did not favour the success of that initiative. In December 2003, the Syrian Arab Republic resubmitted the same initiative to the Security Council. It is still in blue before the Council, awaiting more favourable international conditions for its adoption.

The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its grave concern over the obstacles to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East posed by Israel, which persists in its refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear party and submit all its nuclear installations to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency, in violation of internationally recognized resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council, notably Security Council resolution 487 (1981), and by the United Nations General Assembly, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and review conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Syrian Arab Republic considers the Middle East resolution adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference to be one of the major resolutions pertaining to ridding the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction and, in particular, nuclear weapons. It was adopted as part of an overall agreement on an indefinite extension of the Treaty, and Arab acceptance of the terms of that agreement was based on the overall understanding reached at that time. In the light of the foregoing, the Syrian Arab Republic stresses the following:

1. The 1995 resolution on the Middle East, adopted as part of the agreement to extend the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and reaffirmed by the 2000 Review Conference and other review conferences, remains authoritative.

2. Israel must accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear party and submit all its nuclear installations to an International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards agreement.

3. The upcoming 2012 review conference must, with respect to the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, achieve progress towards the realization of the goals reflected in the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, and must abide by the time frame set at the 2010 Review Conference.

4. Realization of the goals of the 2012 review conference will be impossible unless Israel attends the conference and commits to the establishment of such a zone for the purpose of enhancing international peace and security, in line with General Assembly resolution 66/25, which was submitted by Syria on the basis of the views expressed here and whose sixth preambular paragraph notes that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East would greatly enhance international peace and security. The establishment of such a zone will not be possible unless the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons bring pressure to bear on Israel to agree to its establishment. States Parties that are currently violating their nuclear obligations in relation to the Israeli case must adhere to the Treaty and the commitments contained therein. The depositary States have a special responsibility with respect to the establishment of such a zone, in their capacities as depositaries, as States that voted in favour of the Middle East resolution, and as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms yet again that it stands ready to cooperate with the United Nations Secretary-General in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

IV. Reply received from the European Union

European Union

[Original: English]
[28 June 2012]

Since 1995 the European Union has been a staunch supporter of a process leading to the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

In 1995, the European Union and its member States, together with all the countries from the Middle East and North Africa region, committed in the Declaration of Barcelona on the Middle East to the pursuit of a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems.

In May 2010, at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the European Union member States, who were all part of the 1995 Review Conference and also supported the 1995 Final Document, offered to organize a seminar that could be seen as a first step in the process towards the preparation of a conference in 2012.

The seminar in support of a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East was held in Brussels on 6 and 7 July 2011. It built on a

similar seminar organized in Paris in 2008, but benefited from broad and significant participation. A total of 198 participants, most at the senior level, attended the seminar in their personal capacity, coming from the countries of the Middle East and North Africa region, member States of the European Union, Turkey, and the three Non-Proliferation Treaty depositary States (Russia, United Kingdom and United States) as well as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, Norway and Switzerland. Six international organizations (United Nations, IAEA, Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Implementation Support Unit to the Biological Weapons Convention, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and two regional organizations (League of Arab States and Gulf Cooperation Council) were also represented, together with academics and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Since then, the European Union's role in and contribution to the process has been widely recognized, including by the facilitator for the 2012 conference, Jaakko Laajava of Finland, appointed on 17 October 2011. The facilitator, the three depositary States and several countries from the Middle East region have asked the European Union to take further initiatives.

The European Union has been ready to assist the process further through the European Union Non-Proliferation Consortium of Think Tanks established in 2010. To that end, contacts with the facilitator have been maintained with a view to organizing another track 2 event similar to the July 2011 seminar prior to the 2012 conference towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East region.